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Crossing the Seas Literary Festival at the National Library- "A Sense of Belonging"



Belinda de Veer



Celcio Luciano Milliard and Caresse Isings



Yasmine Allas



Antoni Gario



Bernice Chauly

Sunday evening Aruba welcomed internationally recognized literary figures for the fourth edition of Crossing the Seas, a cultural festival dedicated to the literary arts that goes beyond boundaries and proves that prose and poetry is beautiful in all languages.

The festival is traveling through the territories of the Dutch Kingdom, where each host also includes three members of their literary community in the scheduled recitals. Traveling from Holland to Aruba to share their work was Bas Heijne, and Yasmine Allas (born in Somalia), with Bernice Chauly of Malaysia and

Iman Humaydan, of Lebanon, who has attracted international attention with her book, "B is for Beirut."

Joining them at the podium in the garden of the Arubiana Department of Aruba's National Library was local musical luminary Antoni Gario with poets Celcio Luciano Milliard, Caresse Isings and Belinda de Veer. All are well recognized on their island for creative work, both literary and visual, which Belinda de Veer combined to generate greater impact for her poetry.

This year's theme was "A Sense of Belonging," which greatly influenced, in particu-

lar, the work of the visiting artists such as Yasmine, who as an immigrant to Holland addressed the difficulty of the Muslim community, (particularly the young men) in adjusting to the life there. It is natural that artists who have lived through traumatic times, like Iman Humaydan, would weave the remembrances through their work, such as the civil strife in Beirut, and the human drama it generates.

Bernice Chauly recalled the emotions a young girl of four feels at her father's death; struggling to understand her loss, while the diverse cultures of her parents, a Chinese

mother and Punjabi father, deal with death in different ways that leave a lasting impression.

One of the most striking presentations of the evening was by Antoni Gario, a former Aruban Calypso King who has been composing music since the age of twelve. Calypso is usually comprised of a great deal of social commentary, and

his two musical pieces for the

"Cruza Lama" recital, titled "Harmony" and "Internet" epitomized this musical and literary form.

Literary works were presented in Dutch, English, Papiamentu, and Arabic, with translations in English and Papiamentu projected on a screen. Crossing the Seas is a multilingual, multicultural program that bridges physical boundaries, promoting greater communication and understanding between physically and spiritually diverse groups, and, hopefully, a path to peace.

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